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Workers Begin 16-Day Strike at Diageo’s Cameronbridge Distillery

More than 100 union members walked out at the key Scottish plant after Diageo proposed cutting 13.9% of operator roles.

Monday, September 28, 2026



Workers at Diageo’s Cameronbridge distillery in Fife began the first of 16 planned strike days on Monday, opening a labor dispute that unions say could disrupt production at one of the company’s most important spirits plants in Scotland.

Unite said more than 100 of its members joined the first walkout. GMB Scotland said its members also picketed outside the site as unions challenged Diageo’s plan to cut 10 operator jobs from a group of 72 positions at the distillery. That equals 13.9% of the operator workforce.

The strike is due to continue in stages through Oct. 15, with different groups of workers taking action on different days after Monday’s broader stoppage. Union officials said the rolling action is designed to target specific operations at the plant. GMB said it has notified the company of 16 strike days and is considering further action.

The dispute centers on the company’s restructuring plan and on how it handled consultations with employees. GMB said workers voted for industrial action after accusing Diageo of failing to properly consult on the job losses. The union said a seven-hour meeting between union representatives and management on Sunday did not produce an agreement and left workers more frustrated.

Daniel Reid, a GMB Scotland organizer in the drinks industry, said the union presented alternative proposals that it believed could deliver savings without cutting the jobs in the way the company had proposed. He said those proposals were rejected by management. Unite and GMB both said the action reflects anger among a skilled workforce that believes its concerns were not taken seriously.

Cameronbridge is a key site in Diageo’s production network. The plant produces grain whisky and other spirit used in whisky, gin and vodka. Unions and industry observers view it as a central part of the company’s supply chain in Scotland and the wider U.K. Cameronbridge is widely described as Europe’s largest grain whisky distillery, which means a prolonged stoppage there could have broader effects than a dispute at a smaller site.

Even so, the scale of any immediate production loss remains unclear. Union officials have warned that the strikes could stop production, but no public data has been released on daily output, inventories or the financial effect of the stoppage. That means there is no independent measure yet of how much product could be delayed or lost during the action.

Diageo has pushed back against the suggestion that the strikes will lead to shortages. In comments reported Monday by Latest Grocery Industry News, the company confirmed that it had proposed reducing operator roles by up to 10. It said the move was linked to lower production volumes at the site and said it does not expect the dispute to create product availability problems.

The company’s position points to a familiar tension in manufacturing disputes. Employers often argue that staffing levels must reflect lower demand or lower production needs, while unions say job cuts should come only after serious talks on alternatives, especially at large strategic plants. At Cameronbridge, that disagreement has now moved from meetings into industrial action.

GMB said the Cameronbridge dispute is also part of a wider concern about how Diageo is managing planned workforce reductions in Scotland. The union said workers at the company’s distilleries in the Highlands and islands have also raised concerns over consultation, with 38 jobs there said to be at risk. No agreement has been reached, according to the union, on the final number of losses or on the process for carrying them out.

For workers at Cameronbridge, the issue is not only the number of jobs but also the message it sends about the future of the site. The operator group affected by the proposal works at the core of the distillery’s production process. Unions say removing 10 jobs from that team risks increasing pressure on those who remain and undermining the plant’s long-term operation.

For Diageo, the immediate challenge is to contain disruption at a site that sits near the center of its Scotch and wider spirits production chain. For the unions, the goal is to use the strike calendar to force the company back into talks on staffing and consultation before the full schedule runs its course.

Monday’s stoppage was the first step in that plan. Further action by separate groups of workers is scheduled on successive dates between Sept. 28 and Oct. 15 unless the two sides reach a new agreement in the meantime.